

EXHIBIT 11
DATE 2-18-15
MS 377

February 18, 2015

To: The Education Committee

From: Kathleen Titchbourne
P.O. Box 86
Trego, MT 59934
406-871-8371

RE: Common Core/SBAC

Thesis by student, Kathryn Jentz

Stillwater Christian School, Kalispell, MT

Kathryn Jentz is a high school graduate of Stillwater Christian School in Kalispell, MT, 2014. It has always been her dream to be a teacher and when challenged to write her thesis on what she would like to do when she graduates, she began to research education and stumbled into what had been adopted by officials in our state, and learned what it meant by our Governor's application, "Race to the Top. She was shocked at her findings, as we were, and still are, as parents.

In her research she learned much of what Common Core meant and it's progression over the last 30 years. She wrote her thesis on the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a paper I am attaching for your review.

Miss Jentz graduated and is now a student at Whitworth University in Spokane, WA. Her greatest desire is to see that children receive a "real" education and "not a dumbed down" version.

at the time of her graduation + included
She writes:
She wrote this to me including her paper, "After studying Common Core, I could not believe that we as a nation allowed it to step in and take over our public education! As a (hopeful) future teacher, I am so

glad that awareness is being spread on a national level in an attempt to expel Common Core from American classrooms!"

As a parent – that has been my sentiment exactly – how did this happen? Our school board could not even answer our questions, as they did not understand what it was that they agreed to adopt. I have read the board minutes, it was introduced as, "we need to do something in math and English, because we are weak in those areas" – it was suggested by the elementary school principal that Common Core was the way to go – and ^{the trustees} they voted it in.

are our teachers really expected to train a workforce?

CS Lewis said that "when training beats education, civilization dies".

*What happens to the dream of teaching? The passion to inspire, **

I would also like to leave with you something that Charles

Krauthammer told us ^{some} years ago - that there are three things to watch for:

- 1) The government control of media
- 2) health care
- 3) and education

** to nurture ^{the individual,} ^{the} creative,*
** unique students?*

Look at where we are at.

Thank you for your time and here is a copy for your review.

*I ask you to support HB 377 and HB 376;
to repeal CC (SBAC)*

Over thirty years ago, America dove headfirst into a significant reform in education as a result of Ronald Reagan's "A Nation at Risk" speech.¹ Since then, the Federal Government has spent billions of dollars and countless hours in various attempts to restore American public schools to their former glory. Promising to overturn the decline in American education, program after program has failed to reverse or even stop the decline of schools and instead has lowered the standards for all schools, allowing mediocrity to reign unchecked in America's classrooms. The most recent attempt to solve this crisis is a program called the Common Core States Standard Initiative. This initiative is a set of "rigorous" standards which claim to produce "college and career ready" students who are ready to compete in this "twenty-first century global economy."² While the states are not required to adopt Common Core, the Federal Government and other private organizations³ provide substantial monetary incentives to those states that are willing to implement it. Even though on the surface Common Core appears to be a reasonably decent plan to bring about positive reform in American schools, a closer look and careful study proves just the opposite. Because the Common Core State Standards Initiative has numerous problems with its creation, implementation, and information, these standards—and any like them—will fail to sufficiently educate and prepare children for life as human beings and American citizens.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a set of nation-wide standards that were created in 2009 in response to America's continually declining academic performance.⁴ The goal of this initiative was to create a set of standards for students across the nation that would educate

¹ "A Nation At Risk: 30 Years Later" Recorded April 26, 2013. Thomas B Fordham Institute: Advancing Educational Excellence. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9WMI703WrA>>.

² National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. Common Core State Standards Initiative, "Implementing the Common Core State Standards." Last modified 2012. Accessed February 18, 2014. <<http://www.corestandards.org/>>.

³ i.e. the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, etc.

⁴ John Kendall. *Understanding Common Core State Standards*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011, 1.

them at a high level, comparable with their high-achieving global counterparts, thus prepare them for college and careers.⁵ These Standards are allegedly research-based; however, there is no evidence that they will successfully prepare children for either college or career.⁶ While not a curriculum, the Standards are simply a guideline for teachers to think about while preparing their lectures. Teachers are still free to create their own lesson plans and devise their own teaching strategy; the Standards simply represent the “knowledge and skills students need in English language arts”⁷ in order to succeed in college.⁸ Because these standards reach nearly nationwide,⁹ teachers will be able to share more information—be that curriculum, teaching strategies, or lesson plans.¹⁰ Even though they may not be learning in the same way, students in a given grade across the country will be learning the same principles at the same level on a daily basis—something new to American education. Standardized tests specific to the Common Core State Standards have been developed in order keep schools accountable for teaching students at a “high level.” Both the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) developed standardized tests which students will take to assess what they have learned.¹¹ Depending on which program each state chooses to follow, students will take standardized tests at different times throughout the year.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman. *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012, 6. Nearly all the research that Common Core provides proves only that American education is not up to par with education in high-performing countries around the world.

⁷ There are currently two sets of standards under Common Core: English Language Arts and Mathematics. Due to the necessity for brevity, only the English Language Arts standards will be discussed in this paper.

⁸ National Governors Association, *Frequently Asked Questions*.

⁹ Ibid. Of the 50 states, 44 have adapted their standards with Common Core.

¹⁰ John Kendall. *Understanding Common Core State Standards*, 28-32.

¹¹ Cheryl Dunkle. *Leading the Common Core State Standards: From Common Sense to Common Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012, 95.

While Common Core is a relatively new program, the idea and the people behind it have been around for much longer. One of the organizations that has been vital in every step of the Common Core Initiative is a program called Achieve, Inc. Composed of the nation's governors and business leaders, this group set out in 1996 with the goal of "rais[ing] standards and achievement in public schools."¹² One would naturally assume that teachers would be involved in this effort to reform schools around the nation; however, it was not until nearly ten years later in 2005 that Achieve, Inc. announced that they brought in leading educators in K-12 Education to give their input.¹³ At the 2005 Summit, they announced the creation of a group called the American Diploma Project (ADP) which would later turn into the Common Core.¹⁴ The ADP worked at developing Standards for high school students that would prepare students for college and a career. Because the ADP could not look towards the Federal Government to directly implement their new standards,¹⁵ they took the standards to the governors of each state and requested their implementation.¹⁶ After thirty-five states adapted their previous standards to ADP, the next, and incredibly similar, set of standards came: the Common Core. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) was implemented in much the same way as ADP's standards had been; however, with Common Core, there was a public forum where people were allowed to comment. Regardless of the opportunity for public comment, the vast majority of American citizens had no clue what was going on. Without great speeches from the president and with limited, if any, media coverage, the Common Core silently slipped into American schools. This fact causes a thoughtful person to stop and ponder: with a change in standards in American

¹² "Summits." Achieve. 2014. Accessed April 14, 2014. <<http://www.achievetest.org/summits>>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Darcy Pattison. *What Is Common Core?: A Critique*. Mims House, 2013, 14.

¹⁵ According to the 10th Amendment, the Federal Government is prevented from creating a national curriculum. This will be explained more extensively later on.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15. In her book, Darcy Pattison argues that if ADP's ideas for reform had gone to the vote, there would have been a political uproar. She believed that had the new standards been sent through Congress or even state legislatures, it would have been met with overwhelming unpopularity and most likely would not have been passed.

schools, should not the citizens be made aware of it? One would think that Common Core would receive as much attention as the Affordable Care Act and would advertise the great things that will be happening in the American schools; yet limited mention was made in national news reports regarding Common Core's implementation. The failure to properly inform American citizens about what is happening in American classrooms is not only mildly suspicious, but also slightly alarming.

One claim that Common Core does make is that its purpose is to produce "college and career ready students."¹⁷ At first glance, this sounds like a very commendable goal. The initial crisis, after all, was that American students were falling behind their global counterparts in college graduation and job placement statistics.¹⁸ This conclusion, however, makes extreme implicit judgments on the purpose of education. According to CCSSI, the purpose of education is to prepare children for college and careers. Period. In other words, children are placed in schools for thirteen years in order to be ready for college. In college, students are further prepared to be ready for their careers. What happens, though, after their careers? Is having a good career the main object to achieve in life? While this may be how education is defined in America in the twenty-first century, taking a look at how education has been defined over the past centuries tells a different story.

In the early days of American education, very few people attended college; in fact, not everyone was even given a basic education. Obviously, "college and career readiness" was far from the minds of the Founding Fathers or the leaders of education in the states in the late

¹⁷ National Governors Association.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education, "Archived: A Nation At Risk." Last modified October 7, 1999. Accessed April 13, 2014. <<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>>.

eighteenth century; so what did they think was the purpose of education? A Massachusetts law written by James Madison in 1789 captures the idea quite well:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General court assembled...That every town or district within this Commonwealth...shall be provided with a School-Master or School-Masters, of *good morals*, to teach children to read and write, and to instruct them in the English language, as well as in arithmetic, orthography, and *decent behavior*...¹⁹ (emphasis added).

This brings to light something quite significant that is missing in Common Core's purpose for education. While Common Core covers reading and writing and math, nowhere is there any mention of the need for teaching children what decent behavior is. The Massachusetts law goes on to expound on this idea:

Section 4. Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That it shall be and it is hereby made the duty of...Teachers of Academics, and all other instructors of youth, to take diligent care...to impress on the minds of children and youth, committed to their care and instruction, the principals of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity, and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and *the basis upon which the Republican Constitution is structured*²⁰ (emphasis added).

Not only does Common Core make no mention of teaching children these virtues, students in today's schools would likely not even know the meaning of the majority of the words found in the law. Two hundred years ago, however, these ideas were taught to elementary students throughout Massachusetts! There has been an unmistakable shift in how education is defined now as compared how it was defined in America's early days. The purpose of education used to be generally recognized as instilling both knowledge and virtues in a student.²¹ Under Common Core, the purpose of education is solely to make students "college and career ready."

Another line that Common Core promoters often rattle off is the necessity to compete in this "twenty-first century global economy."²² This phrase also sounds quite impressive; but once

¹⁹ James Madison. Massachusetts State Law, 1789. As quoted in Terrence O. Moore. *The Story Killers: A Common Sense Case Against the Common Core*. San Bernardino CA: 2014, 19.

²⁰ Qtd. Ibid., 20.

²¹ Ibid., 22.

²² National Governors Association.

again, it has some negative inferences.²³ By emphasizing the “twenty-first century,” the phrase implies that anything from the twentieth century (less than fifteen years ago) is outdated and useless. Apparently, something inexplicable happened in the year 2000 which caused everything in education to change. Suddenly the theories that had worked so successfully for centuries were dated and not applicable to this “twenty-first century global economy.” What this statement fails to reflect is that the eighteenth through twentieth century educations in America did, for the most part, an excellent job of educating children through a Liberal or Classical Education.²⁴ Common Core is simply stating that the education that our grandparents had, that our great grandparents had, and even that the Founding Fathers had is not applicable for today’s students.²⁵

The Common Core claims to be rigorous; however, regardless of what the writers say, what the website says, or what the promoters say, Common Core cannot truthfully claim to be rigorous in the traditional sense of the word. While there are some standards within the Common Core that have some merit, one question must be raised as to the overall program: if the standards are allegedly rigorous but every student is able to and expected to achieve them, how can those standards truly be defined as rigorous? Not every student in a select grade is at the same level of learning; some children excel in an academic setting, others have gifts in other areas. In order to accommodate all levels of learners, standards, in general, are forced to settle somewhere in the mid-range learning level. While this may be at a rigorous level for the slower learners who have to struggle to understand something, quicker learners can practically shut off

²³ Granted, there have been some drastic changes since America was founded. Technology, for one, has had a massive affect on life and how it is lived; however, the nature of man has not changed as dramatically. Students still need to be instructed on how to live morally upright lives—something that Common Core makes no mention of. Another significant change is that more people are being educated, not only in America, but also around the world. While this does mean that it will take a superior level of education for America to be at the top of the list for educational quality, the solution to the problem has nothing to do with captioning the world we live in today as “a twenty-first century global economy.”

²⁴ Moore, *Story Killers*, 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

their brains and still surpass the standards. Common Core is no exception to this. A set of standards like this cannot successfully encompass and push the learning ability of all students. Students in either the upper region or the lower region will be left out; and because all students are expected to pass the standardized tests provided by Common Core, the education that the upper region of learners receives will not truly be rigorous for them.²⁶ "If, in fact, the Common Core standards are set so that everyone is able to achieve them, then the bar has just been lowered."²⁷

Another dilemma regarding the quality of Common Core is the fact that it was never tested before being implemented nationwide. What would cause states to blindly implement new standards for schools without first at least looking over them? In order to answer this, one simply has to follow the money trail. In 2009, the Obama administration partnered with Achieve, Inc. and ADP to commence an educational competition for the nation known as "Race to the Top."²⁸ The goal of this program was to inspire reform around the nation and provide an incentive for schools to improve. The plan included giving approximately \$400 million as a monetary incentive to the winning states whose schools showed the best and most creative plans for improvement.²⁹

²⁶ It cannot be ignored that many schools and children in America could be positively affected by the idea of Common Core; however, it also cannot be ignored that many schools will be adversely affected. By catering to the lower region of learners, excellence, in its original definition, will be abandoned and redefined to fit the achievements of this lower level. While it is true these struggling schools do need help, the solution is not to create artificial excellence, lowering the standards for everyone.

²⁷ Dan Makowski. "Common Core." Blog Post. December 17, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2014. <<http://www.stillwaterchristianschool.org/site/Default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=147&PageID=342&ViewID=97313d1d-a9cf-4646-a5a5-0c355fbac071&FlexDataID=2504>>.

²⁸ "Race to the Top." Achieve. 2014. Accessed April 15, 2014. <<http://www.achieve.org/Racetothetop>>.

²⁹ "Race to the Top." *The White House* (blog), accessed April 15, 2014. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top>>. By improvement it was meant who could adapt their standards most efficiently and effectively to ADP and later Common Core.

The first problem with this program is the fact the Federal Government was involved in education at all. The Federal Government has no Constitutional authority to become involved in education in America. The Founders of the Constitution recognized that because the Federal Government is distant from the states, certain responsibilities, such as education, would be more efficient and of higher quality if left up to the states. Education is not included as one of the enumerated rights of the Federal Government as dictated by the Constitution; therefore, according to the 10th Amendment, all authority pertaining to education in America belongs in the hands of, not the Federal Government, but the states and the people who dwell there. This means that when the Federal Government was providing monetary incentives for education, they had no constitutional authority to do so.

The second problem with Race to the Top was that in order to be eligible, schools had to adapt their standards to ADP's standards which would soon morph into Common Core.³⁰ Therefore, knowing only that these new standards were supposed be to rigorous and prepare children for college and career, America let this new program take control of educating the children of this great nation without stopping to verify the credibility of the program. Implementing an untested educational program nation-wide is not only irresponsible, but it is also dangerous. Without a trial run, no one actually knows whether this program will work or if it will cause more harm than good. Without a trial run, no one knows whether the millions of dollars being spent on this reform will be worth it in the end. Speculations like these at a national level are alarming.

One of the dangers of allowing Common Core to step in unchecked is that suddenly it has the monopoly in the education industry—this includes both books and textbooks. Common Core

³⁰ Pattison, *What Is Common Core?*, 16.

claims that they do not have a required reading list; while this is true, they enforce the next best thing.³¹ Common Core has a list of exemplar texts which “demonstrate[s] the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards.”³² Like many issues in Common Core, there are unintentional consequences that follow this list of exemplar texts. If Common Core can regulate what books are promoted, then the demand for those books will increase. Consequently, the books that failed to make it onto the exemplar texts list will not be in as great of demand. Because these “inadequate” books will not be as popular, publishing companies are less likely to keep printing them. By qualifying who is and who is not Common Core certified, many authors and textbook publishers stand to profit who, without this aid, would likely not have even been heard of before. This interference disrupts the flow of the market and stands in striking contrast to the American principles of a free market.

Even if this list of exemplar texts truly was an accurate compilation of all of the most important works—those that have stood the test of time or have been proven worthy—it would still be harmful for education in America. America and Common Core rely quite heavily on standardized testing; and these tests will only cover information found within Common Core’s standards, exemplar texts, or possibly the text books they approve of. The result of this is what

³¹ National Governors Association.

³² Ibid., 7. Common Core uses a system called “Lexile Framework for Reading” which takes into account “word frequency and sentence length” in order to determine how complex a specific text is. While this method may have some merit, it is far from perfect. On page 7 of Appendix A, the writers are forced to admit that, “the Lexile Framework, like traditional formulas, may underestimate the difficulty of texts that use simple, familiar language to convey sophisticated ideas, as is true of much high-quality fiction written for adults and appropriate for older students.” An example of this is found on page 8 of Appendix A where it explains that according to the Lexile Framework, *The Grapes of Wrath* was considered appropriate for grades 2-3. The authors acknowledge both that this book ought to be read in grades 9 or 10 and that the Lexile Framework is not always accurate, yet it continues to be the favored method of identifying which books are suitable for different grades. One reason for the preference is the fact that a computer can determine which books ought to be read. While this is unarguably more convenient, it is not the job of a computer to measure the quality of a book. A computer can, to a point, determine the word complexity of a book, but it, as far as is known now, cannot measure the overall quality and or difficulty of a book. A book may have short, simple sentences that are rich in meaning. Conversely, a book may contain long, complex sounding sentences and be void of any real meaning. A computer should never be left on its own to dictate what American children are reading in schools.

Terrence Moore refers to in his book as “Teaching to the Test.”³³ As a general rule, teachers will teach children only information that will be on the tests in order for the students to score well on them, which conveniently reflects quite well on the teachers. Therefore, if a teacher knows that there will be no questions on Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*, why should he bother to teach it? Though not required, Common Core, thanks to standardized testing, places a costly incentive to teach only the books that they suggest. When children are taught to pass standardized tests instead of to gain knowledge, the quality of teaching is bound to decrease.

On examining Common Core’s list of exemplar texts, several surprising features jump out that prove it is not even a quality list. First of all, there is an overwhelming number of recent authors. The more recent the author and the piece, specifically in the realm of literature, the less likely it is that the piece will be on the same level as Jane Austen or Charles Dickens.³⁴ The reason these authors and others like them have been categorized as classic is because their works have undergone decades of literary criticism and survived. More recent authors have not had this test, so it is difficult to say whether or not they too will be added to the history of great literature.

Another, and much more shocking, discovery from the exemplar texts list is the lack of many pivotal authors and pieces. The list contains, for example, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Ronald Reagan; but does it include Churchill’s, “This is Their Finest Hour” speech? Does it make any mention of America’s valiant efforts and successes in World War II as told by FDR? Does it so much as mention the Cold War and Reagan’s efforts to fight Communism? Sadly, the same answer applies to all of these questions: no. Furthermore Benjamin Franklin, the classic American, and Charles Dickens, an extraordinary author—to

³³ Moore, *Story Killers*, 116.

³⁴ No piece by Charles Dickens is recommended in the list of exemplar texts.

name a few—fail to make the cut. The absence of these authors and selections is rather odd.

Either the authors of Common Core did not think any of them were of high enough literary merit to deserve a place in the standards, or the writers had a specific reason for omitting such pieces.

The latter train of thought brings to light another seemingly subtle, yet dreadfully disturbing point. The standards fail to reflect an accurate representation of America's history by villainizing it and failing to fully recount without bias many of its successes. This line of thinking is evident in multiple ways throughout the exemplar texts and also in the sample performance tasks that are provided as examples for teachers on how to use the texts and the standards together. Whether purposely or not, the Common Core underemphasizes the contributions of the Founding Fathers and discredits the authority of some of the founding documents tainting what it truly means to be an American; and it fails to recount the successes of any war (apart from the Civil War) that America was involved in. These are all serious claims that, if examined and proven true, will be detrimental to the future of this country.

Another way the writers of Common Core fail to represent America's history accurately is through their depiction of some of the greatest politicians America has ever had. Not surprisingly, texts appear from many historically famous and influential Americans: Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and others.³⁵ However, as seen already with FDR and Reagan, while not poorly written speeches, some of the texts by these men are not always their most famous or most pivotal speeches.³⁶ The more critical problem that unfortunately accompanies some of these texts is the way in which

³⁵ National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Last modified 2012. Accessed February 18, 2014. <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf>, 10, 12.

³⁶ A major exception, though not the only one, is Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." This incredibly famous speech is a staple in American history and would cause an uprising if not present in the Common Core.

Common Core suggests they be taught.³⁷ The Constitution, for example, is suggested—well, just the Preamble and the First Amendment, but at least part of it made the cut.³⁸ Along with the Constitution, the writers of Common Core made sure to include, *Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* by Linda Monk. An excerpt from this book that is displayed in Appendix B of the Common Core shows the extreme bias that children are being fed while learning about the Constitution:

For a sense of the *evolving nature* of the Constitution, we need look no further than the first three words of the document's preamble: "We the People." When the Founding Fathers used this phrase in 1787, they did not have in mind the majority of America's citizens... The men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 *could not... have imagined*, nor *would they have accepted*, that the document they were drafting would one day be construed by a Supreme Court to which had been appointed a woman and the descendant of an African Slave (emphasis added).³⁹

From this, children learn that the Constitution is an evolving document and that the Founding Fathers were both extremely sexist and racist. While all of these statements are made as facts, they are actually just conjectures filled with political bias. The authors of the Common Core are quick to mention both that women were not thought of as highly in most areas in the states and also that the Founding Fathers owned slaves. What the authors fail to mention is that both of these were norms in society and had been since the beginning of time! The Founding Fathers knew that if any provision was made to allow women suffrage, many states would also strongly oppose the document. Also, if any antislavery content appeared in the Constitution, not a single southern state would even consider adopting the Constitution. The Founding Fathers knew that

³⁷ The word "suggest" is critical because if Common Core required certain things, it would be considered a curriculum. A national curriculum is unconstitutional according to 10th Amendment of the Constitution. While containing suggested readings and sample performance tasks, Common Core does not force anyone to read anything specific or teach in a certain way. As explained previously, standardized testing plays a (*continued on page 12...*) major role in determining what is taught; therefore, a convincing argument could be made claiming that Common Core actually *is* a nation-wide curriculum, and therefore is unconstitutional for this reason as well.

³⁸ National Governors Association, Appendix B, 9. A Valid question to ask at this point is why is the rest of the Constitution not suggested? Does the Lexile Framework label it as "too complex" for Common Core, a program that emphasizes the value of complex texts? Or do the authors of the Common Core not think it is necessary for students to learn it?

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

directly including either of these topics would prevent entirely the Constitution from becoming a reality for the thirteen states at that time. While most, if not all, of the Founding Father's owned slaves, many of them freed some of their slaves, and Thomas Jefferson even wrote a law hoping to ban slavery in northern states.⁴⁰ Children learning the Constitution under Common Core, however, would not be armed with this knowledge. The text that the Common Core uses to supplement the Constitution is full of political bias and fails to take into account the context of the framing of the Constitution.⁴¹

Common Core also teaches students the Declaration of Independence, and thankfully, there are no modern supplementary texts provided to help students understand it. The problem with the way Common Core handles the Declaration comes in the sample performance tasks. The Common Core authors suggest that teachers direct students' attentions not to the reasons for declaring independence, but rather to the list of grievances against the King. Students are supposed to compare this list with the Olive Branch Petition—a document written by colonists loyal to England who opposed declaring independence.⁴² The authors of the Common Core, whether purposefully or not, successfully direct students away from examining the memorable unalienable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit happiness—and focus them on the lesser known list of grievances. This misrepresentation of America's Founders and founding documents leads children away from familiarity with American ideals and what it truly means to be an American.

Another unexplainable absence that is detrimental to students' view of America is the lack of any documents pertaining to America's involvement in any war except for the Civil War.

⁴⁰ William Freehling. "The Founding Fathers and Slavery." Oxford Journals: Oxford University Press. Accessed April 16, 2014. <<http://cuwhist.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/the-founding-fathers-and-slavery.pdf>>.

⁴¹ If the authors of the Common Core wanted a true supplement to the Constitution, would not the Federalist Papers, written by Thomas Jefferson and others, explaining the Constitution be the more logical choice? Moore, *Story Killers*, 100.

⁴² National Governors Association, *Appendix B*, 171.

World War II is alluded to briefly in Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat" speech addressed to Parliament; however, because this speech makes no mention of America's involvement, it would seem that the U.S. was never even involved in that horrible conflict. The Cold War also is not mentioned—a time when the Land of the Free was paralyzed with the constant fear of nuclear destruction. Another topic that did not make the cut, and probably was purposefully avoided, is the Holocaust. Great literary works were produced describing all of these events—heart-wrenching books, inspiring speeches, memorable stories; yet none were deemed worthy enough for Common Core. America's involvement in any of these worldwide events was no trivial matter; and without their stories being passed on to the next generation, America's history will not be accurately portrayed.⁴³

An argument could possibly be made that since Common Core has already been implemented across the United States, the solution to the problems aforesaid is simply to update Common Core and change it a bit. While this could possibly bring about some beneficial changes, it would fail to bring about all the necessary changes and the standards would still be detrimental to students. Some of the biggest problems with Common Core lie at the heart of the principles and theories behind it. Common Core does not aim for excellence; rather, it promotes mediocrity. It is a one size fits all academic program for a multi-sized nation. Even if there were various levels of standards to match the variety of levels of learners, it would still leave the problem of the extreme and one-sided political bias that the Common Core presents. Each part and piece of Common Core was, presumably, specifically included for a reason; and since Common Core includes no specific explanation for any of its information, it is up to the

⁴³ Granted, the standards being discussed are the English Language Arts (ELA) Standard—not History. Within the ELA standard, there is a section on Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; however, there are, as of this moment, no standards specifically for History or Social Studies standards, nor are there plans for creating any. Naturally, students (should) learn about these particular events primarily in a History class; however, much great literature came from those time periods, the exclusion of which taints the learner's perception of America.

interpretation of the reader to decide why *Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* was included while World War II or the Cold War was not.⁴⁴ Finally, because the 10th Amendment prohibits the Federal Government from becoming involved in education, the whole basis of Common Core collapses. Without the monetary incentives, it is unlikely Common Core would be as popular as it is now.⁴⁵

When dealing with a change of this magnitude, there are many principles that should guide the decision making process; but there is one question that eloquently sums up the spirit of all of them the best: “did [they] leave the world a better place than [they] found it?”⁴⁶ This is the question the writers of Common Core ought to have asked when creating these standards instead of focusing on producing a “college and career ready” nation. Educating the youth—the next generation—is an incredible feat and a tremendous responsibility. Whoever is in control of the education is in control of how that upcoming generation thinks, what they know, how they live. If the educational standards are low, the quality of thinking will be lower. If the information being taught is biased, the students’ knowledge will be skewed and their perspective’s tainted. If the entire purpose of education is viewed incorrectly, the way the students live their lives will be negatively impacted. Unfortunately, the Common Core State Standards Initiative is guilty of all of these charges which will be tremendously detrimental to students both as American citizens and human beings. Due to critical errors throughout the Common Core State Standards Initiative, it will not leave the world or this nation in a better place than before it began.

⁴⁴ Along with no explanation for how the documents were created, there is also no evidence of who the documents were created by. Two people have come out and said they were a part of writing it, but there is no way to verify these claims or to determine who else was a part of their creation.

⁴⁵ Darcy Pattison, *What Is Common Core?*, 15.

⁴⁶ Moore, *Story Killers*, 137.

Works Cited

A Nation At Risk: 30 Years Later" Recorded April 26, 2013. Thomas B Fordham Institute:

Advancing Educational Excellence. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9WMI703WrA>>.

Calkins, Lucy, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman. *Pathways to the Common Core:*

Accelerating Achievement. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012.

Dunkle, Cheryl. *Leading the Common Core State Standards: From Common Sense to*

Common Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012.

Freehling, William . "The Founding Fathers and Slavery." Oxford Journals: Oxford University

Press. Accessed April 16, 2014. <<http://cuwhist.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/the-founding-fathers-and-slavery.pdf>>.

Kendall, John. *Understanding Common Core State Standards*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011.

Makowski, Dan. "Common Core." Blog Post. December 17, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2014.

<<http://www.stillwaterchristianschool.org/site/Default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=147&PageID=342&ViewID=97313d1d-a9cf-4646-a5a5-0c355fbac071&FlexDataID=2504>>.

Moore, Terrence. *The Story-Killers: A Common-Sense Case Against the Common Core*. San

Bernardino CA: 2014.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School

Officers. *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in*

History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B: Text Exemplars

and Sample Performance Tasks. Last modified 2012. Accessed February 18, 2014.
< http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf>.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School
Officers. Common Core State Standards Initiative, "Implementing the Common Core
State Standards." Last modified 2012. Accessed February 18,
2014. <<http://www.corestandards.org/>>.

Pattison, Darcy. *What Is Common Core?: A Critique*. Mims House, 2013.

"Race to the Top." Achieve. 2014. Accessed April 15, 2014.
<<http://www.achieve.org/Racetothetop>>.

"Race to the Top." *The White House* (blog), accessed April 15, 2014
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top>>.

Summits." Achieve. 2014. Accessed April 14, 2014. <<http://www.achieve.org/summits>>.

U.S. Department of Education, "Archived: A Nation At Risk." Last modified October 7, 1999.
Accessed April 13, 2014. <<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>>.